

45270000
1-3
1

A

PRACTICAL ENQUIRY

7

INTO THE

AUTHORITY, NATURE, and DESIGN

OF THE

LORD'S SUPPER;

AS THEY ARE EXPLAINED

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ITSELF.

K

By WILLIAM BELL, D. D.
Prebendary of St. PETER'S, Westminster.

CAMBRIDGE,

Re-Printed by WILLIAM HILLIARD,

For F. NICHOLS—*Boston.*

1800.



TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE following Enquiry will be found, it is hoped, well adapted for the instruction of the plain, practical Christian, in the real nature and end of the Lord's Supper, and the obligation he is under to join in the celebration of that distinguishing christian rite. It is an attempt to render every particular relating to it perfectly clear, and easy to be understood ; by carefully examining the only source of information from which any true knowledge of it can with certainty be derived, —the New Testament itself.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE want of a cheap and concise exposition of the Communion is a common complaint among the Clergy. It is to be lamented that there is no exposition of the Communion fit for general use. There are indeed many books on the subject, but they are too dear or too learned for the use of common readers.

Many respectable clergymen and laymen have perused BELL's *Practical Enquiry*, and think it well adapted, in all respects, for general circulation.— They have recommended its publication in this country in so cheap a form that every person who wants information on the subject may be able to purchase it. This work is in high estimation in England, and is considered a very valuable and useful exposition of the Lord's Supper. It is hoped that its great merit and usefulness will insure it a favourable reception in this country.

A

PRACTICAL ENQUIRY, &c.

SECTION I.

I. Q. *ON what authority must our obligation to celebrate any religious rite be established ?*

A. The obligation we are under to celebrate any religious rite is founded on the authority of the person by whom it is instituted ; and when the institutor is a person authorized to reveal the will of God, we are as much obliged to celebrate such rite, as we are to obey any other particular of the known will of God.

II. Q. *On what must the true design of any religious rite depend ?*

A. The true design of every religious rite must depend entirely upon the intention of the institutor himself with regard to it.

III. Q. *To what sources of information must we have recourse to determine the true nature of any religious rite ?*

A. The intention of the institutor of any religious rite, and consequently the nature and design of the rite itself, must be learned from the declarations of the institutor, considered jointly with all such circumstances as he must be supposed to have regarded at the time of the institution; and from the declarations of such other persons, if any such there be, as are properly authorized to declare his intentions relating to it; and from these authorities only.

SECTION II.

IV. Q. *How may we know what kind of good, or evil, will attend the performance, or omission, of any religious rite?*

A. If neither the words of the institution of any rite, nor the circumstances in which it was instituted, nor the declarations of those who alone are duly qualified to declare its design, contain or imply a promise of any peculiar rewards attending the performance of it; or a threatening of any peculiar punishments attending the omission of it;—the rewards, or punishments, attending the performance or omission of such a rite, can be no other than the good or evil arising from obedience or disobedience to any express command of the institutor; and the good or evil naturally resulting from the due performance or omission of the actions themselves, in which the rite consists.

SECTION III.

V. Q. *By whom was the christian rite, commonly called the Lord's Supper, instituted?*

A. The christian rite commonly called the Lord's Supper,* was instituted by Jesus, and Jesus was divinely commissioned to reveal the will of God.

VI. Q. Who were the persons properly authorized to declare the true design of any rite instituted by Jesus?

A. The Apostles and Evangelists, including St. Paul, were duly authorized, and the only persons so authorized, to preach the religion of Jesus, and declare the design of such rites as he appointed.

VII. Q. From what authorities may the true design of the Lord's Supper be certainly ascertained?

A. The design of the Lord's Supper must be learned from the words of Jesus himself at the institution, considered jointly with the circumstances attending it; and the declarations of the writers of the New Testament relating to it; and from no other authorities whatever.

S E C T I O N IV.

VIII. Q. What accounts have the Apostles and Evangelists given us of the institution of the Lord's Supper?

A. The history of the institution of the Lord's Supper is delivered by the writers of the New Testament in the following passages, and in them only: viz. Matt. xxvi. 26, &c. Mark xiv. 22, &c. Luke xxii. 19, &c. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c. and what they have each related is as follows.

* It has by degrees acquired this name, though not properly belonging to it, on account of its having been instituted by Jesus, at, and immediately after, his last supper.

Matt. *And as they were eating Jesus took bread,*

Mark. *And as they did eat Jesus took bread,*

Luke. *And he took bread,*

Paul. *The Lord Jesus. the same night that he was betrayed, took bread,*

Matt. *And blessed it, and brake it, and gave to his disciples,*

Mark. *And blessed, and brake it, and gave to them,*

Luke. *And gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them,*

Paul. *And when he had given thanks, he brake it,*

Matt. *And said, Take, eat, this is my body,*

Mark. *And said, Take, eat, this is my body,*

Luke. *Saying, this is my body,*

Paul. *And said, Take, eat, this is my body,*

Luke. *Which is given for you ; This do in remembrance of me.*

Paul. *Which is broken for you ; This do in remembrance of me.*

Matt. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks,*

Mark. *And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks,*

Luke. *Likewise also the cup, after supper,*

Paul. *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped,*

Matt. *And gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ;*

Mark. *He gave it to them, and they all drank of it ;*

Matt. *For this is my blood of the New Testament,*

Mark. *And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament,*

Luke. *Saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood,*

Paul. *Saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood.*

Matt. *Which is shed for many,*

Mark. *Which is shed for many,*

Luke. *Which is shed for you,*

Matt. *For the remission of sins,*

Paul. *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

IX. Q. *How far will these accounts enable us to determine the true nature and design of the Lord's Supper?*

A. These passages containing the whole history of the institution of the Lord's Supper, as the Writers of the New Testament have transmitted it to us; all conclusions relating to the design of this rite, drawn from the institution itself, must be founded on a due consideration of the declarations of our Lord here related, and the peculiar circumstances in which they were made.

SECTION V.

X. Q. *From these accounts laid together, what does it appear that Jesus said and did upon this occasion?*

A. Upon a joint view of these several relations it appears, that all our Saviour said and did in in-

stituting the rite under consideration, was as follows :

That while he was at supper with the Twelve he broke a piece of bread, giving thanks to God, and gave it to them all, saying to them, *Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken, or given, for you ; this do in remembrance of me.*

And that after supper he took a cup, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Covenant ; or, this is the New Covenant in my blood ; which is shed for you, or for many, for the remission of sins ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

XI. Q. *From these accounts what appears to have been the design of Jesus in what he said and did in this instance ?*

A. From these accounts given us in the New Testament of what Jesus said and did in instituting this rite, it evidently appears ;

1st, That Jesus commanded the Apostles to observe a practice of breaking and eating bread, and drinking wine, together, in remembrance of him.

When he gave them the bread, he said, *Take eat ; this is my body, which is given for you ; do this in remembrance of me.* Here were two perfectly distinct, and positive commands. The first, to eat of the bread he then gave them, at that time ; the second, to eat bread from that time forward, in remembrance of him. The words, *Take eat*, accompanied with the action of giving them the bread, expressed the first ; and the additional injunction, *Do this in remembrance of me*, the second : since it is evident, that in order to eat bread in remembrance

of him, they must of necessity do it after he should be taken from them.

And this being clear with respect to the bread, there is not in reality any occasion for a distinct proof of the same points with regard to the cup; since it was manifest, that the participation of the one was intended to be accompanied with that of the other. But the words of Jesus will equally prove the certainty of the institution with regard to the cup likewise.

When he gave them the cup, he said, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* Here the words *drink ye all of it*, accompanied with the action of giving them the cup, were a positive command to drink of that cup, at that time; and the additional injunction, *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*, immediately following the express injunction to drink at that time, as well as the positive command to *eat bread in remembrance of him*, was as positive a command to do this after he should be taken from them; clearly signifying by the new clause, *as oft as ye drink it*, that they were not to do this once only after he should have been put to death, but to repeat it as a standing ordinance; though at the same time leaving it to their discretion, to determine how frequently they should do it.

2dly, It appears from the relations of the New Testament, that Jesus commanded them to do this, not as a mere general remembrance of himself; but that they should eat *the bread*, as a memorial of *his body, broken or given for them*; and the *wine* as a memorial of *his blood shed for them*; and conse-

quently *both together*, as memorials of *his death*; and further, of his suffering death for *many*, that is, for all, *for remission of sins*.

And this likewise proves it to have been the intention of Jesus, that the rite should be observed after his death; since they were to regard the bread as a memorial of his body *given for them*, and the wine of his blood *shed for them*; which it was absolutely impossible for them to do till after he should have been actually put to death.

3dly, It appears, that the words and actions of our Lord in instituting this rite, considered in themselves, do neither express, nor imply, any thing more as contained in this rite, than what has now been explained.

4thly, More particularly it appears, that the words and actions of Jesus on this occasion, considered in themselves, do not contain nor imply, either a promise of any special reward, that should attend the performance of this rite, or a threatening of any special punishment, that should attend the omission of it, or any thing more, than a plain description of the rite itself, and a positive command to celebrate it.

SECTION VI.

XII. Q. *Did Jesus institute the rite he now appointed for the observation of the Apostles alone, or to be celebrated by all who should ever come to believe in him?*

A. The Lord's Supper was not instituted by Jesus for the observation of the Apostles alone, but was enjoined by him for a standing rite of his reli-

tion, to be perpetually celebrated by all who should ever profess themselves his disciples.

As the Apostles were the only persons present at the institution of the Lord's Supper, it may possibly be thought we cannot be certain, from Jesus' commanding them to celebrate it, that he meant it to be observed by all who should ever believe in him to the end of the world. Yet this is, in the first place, almost absolutely certain, even from the very words of Jesus in the institution itself.

He expressly directed them *all* to do what he then prescribed ; and not at that time only, but to repeat it, as a practice appointed by him, after he should be put to death* ; without adding any intimation that they were ever to discontinue it ; and the reason he assigned for enjoining it, that he suffered death *for many, for remission of sins*, was neither peculiarly applicable to the Apostles, nor to any particular period of time. And since the reason he assigned for instituting the rite is no less applicable to all universally who shall ever believe in Christ, than it was originally to the Apostles ; and he commanded *all* who were present to celebrate it, without any direction whatever, either to confine the celebration of it to themselves, or to discontinue it at any future period ; it would, I apprehend, be contrary to every principle of reasonable interpretation to suppose, that he did not intend it for a perpetual and universal rite of his religion.

And this obvious conclusion, from Jesus' words alone, will derive no little additional strength from the particular circumstances in which they were delivered. At the time when Jesus gave the Apostles

B

* See this proved in the first part of the answer to the immediately preceding question.

this injunction, he was celebrating with them the Paschal Supper, which was instituted by the law of Moses for a perpetual memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, to be solemnly celebrated by every Jew*. And since it is indisputable, that Jesus designed the christian rite he instituted at this time to be, in like manner, a memorial of the redemption of the world, through his death for the remission of sins; we are absolutely bound to conclude from every circumstance accompanying the institution, that Jesus intended it to be a perpetual rite of his own religion, as the passover was of the Jewish; and to be universally celebrated by every Christian, as the passover was enjoined to be, and actually was, by every Jew.

And when in confirmation of this conclusion it is considered, that the Apostles not only celebrated this rite themselves, but enjoined all who professed the faith to celebrate it likewise; and died without giving them even the smallest intimation that it ever was to be abolished; no further proof, that this institution was designed by Jesus for a perpetual ordinance of his religion, can be wanted†.

SECTION VII.

The Lord's Supper being established as a standing rite of the religion of the Gospel, the next point to

* See Exod. xii. 14. 17, 25—27. xiii. 8—10. xxiii. 15. xxxiv. 18. Deut. xvi. 1—6.

† Many other arguments, demonstrative of this fundamental point, may be seen in the Treatise at large, from which this abridgment is taken: but what has here been alledged will be sufficient, it is imagined, to give full satisfaction to the plain practical reader; without requiring his attention to other arguments, which though abundantly conclusive, are less obvious and familiar.

be ascertained is, what effects arise from the performance or neglect of it.

XIII. *Q. What benefits are we warranted to expect from the due performance of any rite instituted by Jesus, to which he did not by declaration annex any special benefits, at the time of the institution?*

A. All the benefits we are warranted in expecting from the due performance of any rite instituted by Jesus, to which no special benefits have been positively annexed, can be no other than these:

1st, That approbation of God, which an intentional compliance with his will must certainly procure. And

2dly, Whatever additional strength our principles and habits of virtue may naturally acquire by the celebration of any religious rite, owing to the virtuous tendency of the rite itself.

XIV. *Q. What evils are we warranted in apprehending from the omission of any rite instituted by Jesus, to which he did not by declaration annex any special evils at the time of the institution?*

A. All the evils we are warranted in apprehending from the omission of any rite instituted by Jesus, to the omission of which no special evils have been positively annexed, can be no other than these:

1st, That disapprobation of God, which an intentional disobedience to his will must certainly produce. And,

2dly, The loss of whatever additional strength our principles and habits of virtue might naturally acquire by the celebration of any particular religious rite, owing to the virtuous tendency of the rite itself.

XV. Q. *How far does it appear, from the principles already considered, what benefits certainly attend the due celebration of the Lord's Supper; and what evils certainly attend the omission of it?*

A. Since neither the words, nor the actions of Jesus in instituting the Lord's Supper do in themselves contain, or imply, a promise of any special benefits to reward the celebration of this rite; or a threatening of any special evils to punish the omission of it; it must be granted, that there neither are, nor can be, any other benefits attending the performance, nor any other evils attending the omission of it, than those just described under Questions XIII and XIV;—Unless it shall be found, either that some circumstances yet unnoticed accompanied the institution of it, which will give some peculiar meaning to the words and actions of our Lord in the institution of it; or, that the Apostles in their writings have communicated to us some particulars of its nature and effects, which neither the words or actions of Jesus in the institution itself, nor the circumstances attending it, imply.

SECTION VIII.

XVI. Q. *Did any peculiar circumstance accompany the institution of the Lord's Supper?*

A. This peculiar circumstance attended the institution of the christian rite in question, That the Supper at which it was instituted was not a mere common meal, but the Paschal Supper, a very remarkable rite of the Jewish Law.

XVII. Q. *Must Jesus be supposed to have attended to this peculiar circumstance when instituting this rite?*

A. It is certain that Jesus was accustomed to allude, both in his words and his actions, to those peculiar circumstances and situations in which he was speaking or acting.

XVIII. Q. *Ought we then to conclude, that Jesus certainly intended to give the rite he instituted at this time any resemblance to the Jewish Paschal Supper?*

A. If we should find any manifest resemblance between the christian rite, which we call the Lord's Supper, and that Jewish rite which Jesus was celebrating with the twelve at the time of its institution, we may reasonably infer, that it was the design of our Lord to make the one so far bear resemblance to the other.

XIX. Q. *Can any resemblance which Jesus could design to make between the Lord's Supper and the Paschal Supper, warrant us in attributing any special rewards, not mentioned by Jesus, to the celebration of the Lord's Supper; or any special evils, not mentioned by Jesus, to the omission of it?*

A. Neither that resemblance which subsists between the Lord's Supper, and the Jewish Paschal Supper, nor any possible allusion in the institution of the one to the other, can warrant us in supposing, that any other benefits or evils attend the celebration or omission of the Lord's Supper than those already mentioned as necessarily arising from the institution itself, under Quest. XIII and XIV*.

B 2

* The Jewish Paschal Supper was instituted for a memorial of the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt; and was purposely designed to promote their obedience to the precepts of the Law delivered to them by Moses; but it had not any special benefits annexed to the performance of it, or any evils, peculiar to that rite, denounced against the

XX. Q. *Could Jesus intend to give the rite he instituted at his last supper any resemblance to any other Jewish rite besides the Paschal Supper?*

A. It cannot be supposed that Jesus intended to give the rite he himself instituted a resemblance to any other Jewish rite besides the Paschal Supper. For it was the Paschal Supper only, which he was celebrating with the twelve when he instituted his own rite; and there is no other Jewish memorial to which it bears any resemblance. This is so evident as to need no proof.

SECTION IX.

XXI. Q. *What do the nature and effects of the Lord's Supper appear to be, as far as they can be proved from the history of its institution, and all the circumstances accompanying it?*

A. Since from the history of the institution of the Lord's Supper it is highly reasonable to believe, That in it Jesus did allude to the Paschal Supper, but not to any other Jewish rite; and since no resemblance whatever to the Paschal Supper can make the Lord's Supper any thing different from what the words of the institution proved it to be*; it must be allowed, that as far as the nature of this rite can be ascertained from the words of the insti-

neglect of it. See Exodus xii. 15. 19. Numb. ix. 13.—It is therefore plain, that the general resemblance which there is between the Lord's Supper as a memorial of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the Paschal Supper as a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, cannot afford us even the smallest pretence for attributing any special benefits or evils to the celebration, or neglect, of the Lord's Supper.

* See the note under Question XIX. page 17.

tution, considered jointly with all the peculiar circumstances accompanying it, the Lord's Supper is simply—A memorial of our Lord ; but more especially of his death, and the general purpose for which he died ; having no other benefits annexed to the celebration, nor any other evils to the omission of it, than those necessarily attending the celebration or omission of any other positive rite under the christian dispensation, explained already under Questions XIII and XIV.*

SECTION X.

XXII. *Q. What ends must we suppose Jesus to have had in view in the institution of this rite ?*

A. In the first place, that of obliging all Christians to meet together, to the end of the world, for the celebration of such a rite, as would necessarily be a solemn public profession of the christian faith.

And secondly, as the celebration of this rite, with those serious reflections and thankful acknowledgments, which the voluntary sufferings and death of

* St. Paul having expressly spoken of the Lord's Supper in the 10th and 11th chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians, and another passage in the same epistle, as well as one in St. John's Gospel, having by some been supposed to relate to it ; we should now go on to shew, that what St. Paul has said of this rite is perfectly agreeable to that account of its nature and use, which the history of its institution has obliged us to receive ; as well as, that neither of the other passages can give us any insight into it.—These points are fully discussed in the second edition of the Treatise at large ; but as the only arguments that can determine them are unavoidably founded upon such an enquiry into the meaning of the passages in question, as the mere practical reader could not derive any information from, it would be improper to insert them in this abridgment.

Jesus, for the redemption of man, evidently require, has a direct and strong tendency to strengthen our religious principles, and improve our practice, and thus to promote the great objects of the Gospel ; it seems absolutely necessary to conclude, that in the institution of this rite, our Saviour had likewise the design of contributing to promote by it these beneficial effects.

SECTION XI.

XXIII. Q. *By what principles must the due celebration of any rite, and the effects arising from it, be determined ?*

A. The true nature of any religious rite being known, every thing necessary to the due celebration of it, and all the effects arising from it, must from thence be determined.

XXIV. Q. *When is the participation of the bread and wine, in the Lord's Supper, accompanied with that disposition with which Jesus designed it should be celebrated ?*

A. The Lord's Supper being simply a memorial of our Lord, but more especially of his death, and the general purpose for which he died ; whoever eats the bread and drinks the wine at the celebration of this rite, in designed remembrance of our Lord, but more especially of his death and the general purpose for which he died, does truly and properly fulfil the command of Jesus in this institution, so far as relates only to the immediate action of which the rite consists.

XXV. *Q. When is the participation of the bread and wine made actually productive of its proper and designed effects ?*

A. Since the act of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Jesus, but more especially of his death, and the general purpose for which he died, should naturally lead us to the most serious reflections upon the goodness of God in appointing the plan for our redemption, and that of our Lord in fulfilling the part he sustained in it ; together with the accumulated obligations we are thus laid under to fulfil the terms of our salvation, and the fatal consequence of disregarding them ; we are bound to consider it as one unquestionable design of our Lord in ordaining this rite, that we should seriously apply the celebration of it to this excellent purpose. Whoever therefore celebrates this rite, without being careful to make this use of it ; though he may actually eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of our Lord, and his death ; does not make such a use of this commemoration of him, as the plain reason of the thing, and the moral doctrines of the gospel require.

XXVI. *Q. In what light are we to regard that particular Service, or Form of Prayer, which the Church we are members of has appointed to be used for the celebration of the Lord's Supper ?**

A. The rite itself, as instituted by our Lord, consisting of nothing more than the actions of eating bread and drinking wine, with the intention prescribed ; whatever prayers any Church may think fit to adopt, as well as whatever form of words they may appoint for the officiating person to make use

* This is designed primarily for the Episcopalians, but is equally true of all others. E.

of in distributing the bread and wine ; in a word, whatever is said or done at the celebration of this rite, except the distribution and partaking of the bread and wine, with the professed design already mentioned ; is no part of the rite itself, as ordained by our Lord, but must rest entirely upon human prudence and authority ; and is so far proper, but only so far, as it may be wisely calculated to remind the participant of that particular design, which is essential to the due performance of the rite ; and to excite those dispositions of piety and virtue, to which the celebration of this rite naturally leads, and with which it evidently ought to be accompanied.

SECTION XII.

XXVII. *Q. What are the benefits which certainly arise from a due participation of the bread and wine, in obedience to the command of our Lord ?*

A. The Lord's Supper having been instituted by Jesus, without his annexing any special benefits to the celebration of it, the benefits *certainly* arising from the due celebration of it can be no other than these :

1st, That approbation of the Almighty, which a voluntary obedience to his commands, upon the sincere principles of religion and piety, must certainly procure : and

2dly, Whatever strengthening of our principles and habits of virtue will naturally arise from the serious and due performance of a rite, in which the death of our Lord, and the general purpose for which he died, are the very things commemorated*

* See Questions XIII and XXII.

XXVIII. *Q. What are the evils unavoidably incurred by refusing to partake of the bread and wine in obedience to the command of our Lord?*

A. The Lord's Supper having been instituted by Jesus without his annexing any special evils to the omission of it, the evils *unavoidably* incurred by the omission of it, can be no other than these :

1st, That disapprobation of the Almighty, which designed disobedience to, or the careless neglect of his commands, must certainly occasion : and

2dly, The loss of all that improvement of our virtuous habits and dispositions, which would naturally arise from the serious and due performance of a rite, in which the death of our Lord, and the general purpose for which he died, are the very things commemorated*.

XXIX. *Q. How are the demerits of an inconsiderate manner of partaking of the bread and wine to be estimated?*

A. The demerits of a thoughtless, light, unworthy manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper, must wholly depend upon the actual ill principles and intention ; or at least the culpable want of good principles, and a good intention ; in every particular instance, and in each particular person ; of which God alone can judge.

XXX. *Q. On what principles must the punishment incurred by an inconsiderate manner of partaking of the bread and wine be regulated?*

A. The Lord's Supper having been instituted without any special punishments annexed to a

* See Questions XIV and XXII.

thoughtless, light, unworthy manner of celebrating it* ; the punishment incurred by such a manner of receiving it must be regulated by the personal demerits of each individual in each particular instance.

XXXI. *Q. Is any guilt contracted, or any punishment incurred, by refusing to partake of the bread and wine, from a belief that Jesus intended this rite to be celebrated by the Apostles only?*

A. Should any one be sincerely convinced, that the Lord's Supper was not instituted by Jesus for a

* We learn indeed from St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xi. 30—32. that many of them were punished in a special manner, with weakness, sickness, and death, for their unworthy, irreverent behaviour, when met together to celebrate the Lord's Supper ; and this with a design to chastize them, in order to prevent their being condemned with the world.—But these judgments were not any established punishments, annexed to the unworthy celebration of the Lord's Supper, and always accompanying it ; on account of any thing peculiar in the nature and effects of the rite itself ; but extraordinary punishments, inflicted on the Corinthians by the special interposition of God at that particular time only ; in order the more effectually to further the propagation, and secure the establishment of the Gospel, in those early days of its infant state.

But because many persons have been deterred from partaking of the Lord's Supper, or rendered very uneasy in partaking of it, by apprehensions of danger attending it ; founded upon the expressions in the 11th chapter of St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, of EATING AND DRINKING UNWORTHILY ; —BEING GUILTY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD : —AND EATING AND DRINKING DAMNATION TO OURSELVES, NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY ; —it may here be highly proper to remind the plain practical christian, That if we partake of the bread and wine in this rite with a sincere good intention of commemorating by it the sufferings and death of Jesus, in designed obedience to his positive command ; these expressions of St. Paul relating to the Corinthians cannot be at all applicable to us ; and our celebration of this rite will be so far from being attended with any danger, that, on the contrary, it must be well-pleasing in the sight of God, as one instance of the proper discharge of our duty, as believers in Christ.

standing rite of his religion, but merely for the observance of the Apostles themselves who were present at the institution ; no punishment whatever will be incurred by him for omitting to celebrate it under this persuasion, but he must be answerable for the honest, or dishonest use he made of his understanding, in consequence of which he embraced this opinion.

SECTION XIII.

XXXII. *Q. Is it in the power of God to impart any inward grace, or spiritual assistance to man ?*

A. It is in the power of God to produce whatever thoughts he may please in the mind of man ; and by that means to afford us such assistance as his wisdom may see fit, towards the practice of our moral and religious duties, by the unperceived operation of the Divine Spirit.

XXXIII. *Q. Are we authorized to expect any special assistance of this kind, as the appointed reward of a due participation of the bread and wine ?*

A. These gracious influences of the Spirit, which, whenever communicated, are so many instances of the divine goodness toward us, may be vouchsafed to us either at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or in the performance of any other act of religious worship, or upon any other occasion whatever, though no way immediately connected with divine worship ; as often as the wisdom and goodness of God shall see fit to vouchsafe them : but we have not any promise, or even any the slightest intimation, either from our Lord himself, or any of the Apostles,

of their being peculiarly conferred upon us, on account of our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

XXXIV. Q. *In what circumstances, and upon what occasions, may we reasonably indulge hopes of being favoured with the most efficacious influence from above, to assist us in the discharge of our moral and religious duties?*

A. Whatever spiritual assistance the goodness of God may at any time vouchsafe to man, the reason of the thing forces us to believe, that it will not be vouchsafed us in the most ample degree, on account of the mere performance of any religious rites, or any acts of religious worship; but on those trying occasions, in the various difficulties of active life, when the circumstances we are placed in bring the strength of our virtuous and religious principles to the severest proof; and when under such trials we actually exert the greatest degree of virtue; and at the same time apply, with the properest disposition, for the divine assistance to strengthen our own weakness, and enable us to support the part which religion and virtue require.

XXXV. Q. *If we compare the different acts of religious worship with each other; which of them appears in itself adapted to make the deepest impressions upon our minds, and to render us the most deserving of spiritual assistance from above?*

A. Comparing our different acts of religious worship together, with respect to the natural tendency of the acts themselves; the Lord's Supper, in which the sufferings and death of Christ, and the general purpose for which he died, are the very things commemorated, is of all mere acts of religious worship naturally in itself adapted to possess our

minds most strongly with religious reflections ; and to induce, as well as enable us to strengthen most effectually every virtuous resolution ; and so far to render us deserving of, and thus enable us to obtain, the greatest share of assistance from above.

SECTION XIV.

XXXVI. *Q. How far, and on what principles, is our future salvation affected, by our partaking of the bread and wine, in obedience to the command of our Lord ;—or our refusing to partake of them ;—or partaking of them without a due serious attention to the nature of the particular events designed to be commemorated by them ?*

A. Partaking of the Lord's Supper does so far contribute to our future salvation, as it is a designed compliance with an express command of our Lord, naturally productive of those benefits already explained under Questions XXVII. and XXXIII. But the performance of this rite has no influence peculiar to itself in procuring for us a state of happiness hereafter, nor can it at all contribute towards our obtaining it, by any other means, than the virtuous effects we take care to make it productive of, in our principles and our practice.—Refusing to partake of the Lord's Supper does so far endanger our salvation, as it may be an act of voluntary disobedience* to an acknowledged command of our Lord, naturally productive of the evils described under Question XXVIII.—And performing the outward actions of eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper, without seriously reflecting upon the particular events commemorated in it, and the influence they ought to have upon our own conduct, does so

* See Question XXXI.

far endanger our salvation, as it may contain a certain degree of want of religious principle, and a culpable insensibility of the sufferings of our Lord, and the blessings of our redemption; of the guilt of which, in every distinct instance, God alone is the proper judge.

XXXVII. *Q. Are we authorized to consider the celebration of the Lord's Supper as in any degree an appointed means for procuring the remission of our sins?*

A. No. If ever the bread and wine are received whether by the well, the sick, or the dying, as appointed means of obtaining the remission of sins or in any other light, than merely as an act of disobedience to a positive command of our Lord, naturally expressive of faith in him; and when seriously performed, as naturally conducive to all such dispositions as that faith requires; the participant is deceived, and the rite itself misapplied.

XXXVIII. *Q. When is an habitual refusal to join in the celebration of this rite sinful; and with what aggravating circumstances is this sin accompanied?*

A. To live in the belief of the christian religion and yet to refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper (except in the case of a conscientious persuasion that this rite was designed by our Lord for the observation of the Apostles alone;) is living in this instance in a voluntary habit of sin, because in an habitual disobedience to a command acknowledged to be divine*; and in this particular sin are included these

* To the general rule here laid down one exception must be admitted. If any individual is sincerely persuaded, that the method of administering the bread and wine adopted by any particular Church is so erroneous and superstitious as to

aggravating circumstances, that it is a voluntary contempt of an express command of our Lord extremely easy to be complied with; given at the very time when he was going to suffer for our sakes; expressly intended to recal to our remembrance the sufferings he voluntarily underwent to accomplish our redemption; and on that account not only the most solemn rite of his religion, but that which gratitude ought to render us peculiarly willing to celebrate.

XXXIX. *Q. How often is it incumbent on us to partake of the bread and wine?*

A. Neither our Lord himself, nor the Apostles, having given us any precept to determine how often we ought to partake of the Lord's Supper, no precise limits can be assigned to our duty in this particular. But since we are absolutely obliged to assist at this rite, by the express command of our Lord†; since the excellent moral and religious tendency of the rite itself is evident beyond question; and since we know the Apostles taught the first christians to partake of it very often; it must certainly be incumbent on us to join in it so frequently, according to the circumstances in which we may happen to be placed, as to shew plainly, that we regard it as one positive duty of the religion of Christ; and, for that reason, take pleasure in discharging it.

C 2.

render it sinful for him to give countenance, by his example, to such error and superstition; his partaking of them in that manner would then be sinful, and it becomes his duty to abstain from partaking of them in that Church.—But in order to secure him from all fault in this instance, it behoves him to be particularly careful to make an honest and virtuous use of his abilities, in forming the judgment on which he acts.

† Except in the case mentioned under Question XXXI.

XL. Q. Is any particular space of time necessary to be set apart for preparing ourselves to partake of the Lord's Supper, in order to render our celebration of it an acceptable service ?

A. Since the the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a religious commemoration of him, but more especially of his death, and the general purpose for which he died ; and these particulars may be all commemorated with a truly pious and devout disposition, without our setting apart any precise period of time to prepare ourselves for it ; such a practice is no more strictly necessary, however useful we may make it, for the worthy participation of the Lord's Supper, than for the worthy performance of any other act of religious worship : and habitual good intentions to regulate our conduct by the precepts of the gospel, joined to the serious employment of our thoughts, at the time, upon the business we are about ; will in every instance render our attendance upon the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as well as our performance of every other act of religious worship, an acceptable service.

XLI. Q. Can it be proper for those who have been guilty of great sins to partake of the bread and wine ? and if it may, on what principles, and in what manner ought they to partake of them ?

A. Since the partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord is an absolute christian duty, and the serious performance of it has a natural tendency to produce a beneficial effect upon our lives ; every attendance upon it really proceeding from a conviction of its being a duty, and accompanied with serious attention to the particulars commemorated in it, must in all cases whatever be as proper and praise-worthy, as a similar serious atten-

dance upon any other act of religious worship, in the same case.

XLII. Q. Does not the due celebration of this rite require a more particular attention to the great events commemorated in it, and the influence they ought to have upon us, than any other act of religious worship?

A. Since the particulars to be peculiarly commemorated in this rite, are such as, above all others, ought to penetrate the heart with the warmest sense of gratitude, both to our Creator and Redeemer; and to excite the most unreserved acknowledgment of all our religious duties, and the sincerest sorrow for our sins; as well as induce us to form and cultivate such virtuous resolutions as may produce that actual uprightness of conduct, which is the great object of the gospel dispensation; it is more especially our duty in partaking of the Lord's Supper in particular, though it is likewise our duty when we perform any act of religious worship in general, to reflect so much, and so seriously, upon the particulars expressly commemorated in it, and the effect they ought to have upon us; as to make our celebration of it actually conducive to that virtue, which the gospel terms of salvation require.

CONCLUSION.

IF the principles above laid down are true, and the consequences drawn from them just; it follows,

That the Lord's Supper is a rite of the simplest and plainest nature, perfectly intelligible to every capacity.

That it is nothing more than what the words of the institution fully express, A religious commemoration of the sufferings and death of Christ, and the general purpose for which he died ;—which is the absolute duty of every one who believes in him to celebrate, because Christ himself enjoined it ;—and which requires nothing more for its worthy celebration, than that intentional obedience and serious disposition of mind, which deliberate reflection upon the particulars commemorated in it will naturally produce.

That as the performance of it is not attended with any other benefits, than those we ourselves take care to make it productive of, by its religious influence on our principles and practice ; so nothing but our own want of a serious and good intention in performing it, can possibly make it productive of any danger or evil.

That as its principal object is the commemoration of the sufferings of our Lord in accomplishing the adopted plan of our redemption, we ought always to be disposed to celebrate it, with the same readiness, the same thankfulness, and the same satisfaction of mind, as ought to animate us when we offer up our thanksgivings to God in our constant acts of worship.

And, in fine, that though it is left to our discretion how often to celebrate it, nothing so well manifest our proper ideas of, and attention to it, as an habitual performance of it, whenever an opportunity is purposely afforded us ; while an habitual omission of it, when set before us, unavoidably convict us, either of ignorance of its universal and perpetual obligation ; some

conception of its nature and effects ; or an intentional disobedience to a positive christian duty.— The injunction of our Lord is always a reason for performing it ; and, if rightly understood, there cannot be any good reason for avoiding it ; consistent with those principles which habitually influence the conduct of a man of virtue, and upon which whoever professes himself a Christian would be understood to act.



10. 00 67

F. NICHOLS

HAS for Sale, a great variety of books in every branch of learning, and imports the latest and best foreign publications, which he sells as cheap at least as any person in New-England.

Sold by F. NICHOLS,

Gerard's Pastoral Care, Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Newton on the Prophecies, Gilpin's Exposition of the N. Testament, Percy's Key to the N. Testament, Bp. Wilson's Private Meditations, Merrivale's Daily Devotions, Goadby's Bible, Geddes's Bible, Doddridge's Expositor, Watson's Theological Tracts, Clarke's and Pyle's Paraphrase, Bp. Prettyman's Theology, Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, Smith's Moral Sentiments, Mosheim's, Gregory's, and Campbell's Ecclesiastical Histories, the English Preacher (an excellent collection of old sermons, selected, revised, and abridged by Dr. Enfield), The Scotch Preacher (a collection of sermons by Scotch Divines), Knox's Family Lectures (a valuable collection of sermons), the sermons of Secker, Sherlock, Wilson, Butler, Hurd, Enfield, Drysdale, Porteus, Walker, Glaspey, Townsend, Cooper, Blair, Hewlett, Jortin, Ogden, Fordyce, Clarke, Dodd, Sterne, Fawcett, Carr, Leechman, Jardine, Bourdaloue, Saurin, Massillon, &c.

Greek, Latin, English, French, Spanish and Italian Dictionaries; a great variety of books of education, philosophy, mathematics, classics, law, physic, history, voyages and travels, and miscellaneous literature.

1

